

Scripture Views of the Atonement;

—AND—

THE ATONEMENT, THE CONSERVATIVE FORCE OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE.

TWO SERMONS,

—BY THE—

REV. W. JACKSON, KINGSTON, ONT.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY REV. G. M. GRANT, D.D., PRINCIPAL
OF QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY.

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The following Sermons were prepared in the ordinary course of my ministry without the slightest regard to their publication. Had I thought of this they would probably have been more carefully written; but some of the congregation who heard them desiring to see them in print, they are here presented to the public in the form in which they were delivered.

W. J.

Kingston, May, 1880.

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, {
May 7th 1880.

Ministers seldom read sermons, but I have read and re-read Mr. Jackson's two sermons on the Atonement with very great pleasure. They are clearly thought out and suggestive. The great subject is treated with the reverence that well becomes us when we try to think over the thoughts of God, and at the same time with a freshness and free-handling that shows that the writer has too much reverence for truth to be satisfied with merely uttering forms of sound words. I hope that these Sermons may have a wide circulation, for they are of quite unusual excellence.

GEORGE M. GRANT.

Scripture Views of the Atonement.

A SERMON.

BY REV. W. JACKSON,

KINGSTON, ONT.

In discussing a subject like the one announced for to-night I shall not confine myself to any particular text, the subject is too wide for that. Not for exposition, therefore, but as a motto, we will take the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "And not only so but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement."

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" were the words spoken to Moses on a memorable occasion when he stood in the immediate presence of Jehovah. We stand this evening in the presence of the grandest of all achievements as well as the most important of all truths. The atonement is the central truth of Christianity—the pivot on which it turns. Considered as a doctrinal system, the atonement is to Christianity what the key-stone is to the arch—the power which binds it together in one solid and symmetrical whole. Considered as a life, the atonement is to Christianity what the heart is to the human body—the fountain from whence it emanates and the motive power by which it acts.

Important, however, as this doctrine is, accurate conceptions of its nature are less frequent than we suppose. What is the atonement? is a question easier asked than answered. I see with pain that dreamy sentiment is to a large degree supplanting clear thought on this most vital question. It is present in the minds of the masses as a dogma to be believed in order to salvation, but there is little emphasis laid upon it as a doctrine founded on the fitness of things, and there is little effort made to grasp the

principles on which it is based or the methods by which it seeks its ends. This is equally a matter of solicitude and regret.

I am aware that when man has done his best there will be much in this doctrine that he does not and cannot understand. What, then, because we cannot reach the summit of this sunlit mountain, are we to remain forever in the fogs of indolent credulity? No! we are bound by the facts of our nature to aim to have intelligent reasons for our convictions and acts. If I am to trust my interest for time and eternity to the death of Christ, the question arises in my soul and I cannot crush it—*Why?*

I do not mean that the *rationale* of the atonement is necessary in order to salvation. That would exclude the salvation of infants, of idiots, and of all who have not come under the direct influence of Christian teaching; a conclusion equally repulsive to man as it is derogatory to the character of God. A man may be saved by a simple reliance on the fact of the atonement who is in utter ignorance of the reasons on which it rests. This arises from the fact that the atonement is not the reason for the sinner's faith, but for the exercise of God's mercy in saving. Notwithstanding all this, however, any man who has any care to be an intelligent Christian will, in the spirit of reverence and humility, try to ascertain from Scripture a solution of the questions which arise in his own bosom as he contemplates the death of Christ.—*Why? How? Wherefore?* These questions require close, consecutive, protracted thought, which God will reward by a good degree of clearness and certainty.

I am aware that we are often told that we must not theorize on this subject, but accept the fact as revealed in Scripture.

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In one respect this is sound advice, in another it is most unwise. The stereotyped phraseology and the morbid sentimentality which prevails so extensively on this subject is neither more nor less than a refuge from intellectual difficulties or an excuse for the neglect of intellectual effort. Besides it is simply impossible to think about the atonement without building up a theory. The moment you begin to think about it that moment you begin to theorize. It has been remarked in relation to this subject that "to speculate is perilous; not to speculate is more perilous still." The vital issues which hang upon the atonement urges us to some definite thought on the subject. It is no curiosity that prompts our enquiries but the awful problem of eternal life or death as the destiny of our souls. I want to aid you if I can to some definite ideas on this subject. I am not going to dogmatize but suggest.

1. First, then, I want you to notice that the atonement is no after-thought in the Divine Government. Infidel objectors have sometimes used the doctrine of atonement as taught in Scripture as an argument against the perfection of God. This may have arisen from the careless use of the word *expedient* when applied to this subject. In the ordinary sense of that term the atonement is no expedient—no after-thought of the Divine Governor of the world to meet an unforeseen exigency, but part of an eternal plan. The purpose of redemption was an eternal purpose. It in no way compromises the perfection of its Divine Author. The creation of a free agent like man implied the possibility of sin, the Divine prescience saw that man in the use of his freedom would sin—saw it long before man was created, and in the infinite love of His heart God provided for the sinner's salvation ere a single intelligent creature had been called into being. The testimony of Scripture on this point is most clear and incontrovertible. "Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He was "verily foreordained before the foundation of the world; but was manifest in these last times for us." So that we may safely adopt the language of Joseph Cook and say "the plan of redemption is no insertion into the universe to correct mistakes. It is a part of the perfect purpose of Him who was, and is, and is to come, who, in all eternities past and in all eternities future will be faith-

ful to the plan which was, and is, and is to come."

2. I want you to observe that the absolute oneness of Christ's person is a most important consideration in the construction of any theory of the atonement. The separation in our thoughts between the human and the Divine nature in the person of our Lord has been a fruitful source of error. The careful reader of the Scriptures will have observed that the works of Christ involved the possession of attributes which belong to the Divine nature and others which belong to human nature, but the works are uniformly predicated of the *one* person. Take a single illustration: it was the act of a human friend to weep at the grave of Lazarus. It was the exercise of a Divine prerogative that raised him to life. Both these acts, however, are ascribed to the one person—the same Jesus with the wet of human tears on His face and crying "Lazarus come forth." The custom of drawing a line between the Divine and human nature of Christ so prevalent in modern religious thought is utterly unknown to Scripture. If we desire our thoughts to harmonize with the Word of God we must drop this distinction. His work as the Redeemer did not in any instance belong exclusively either to the human or the Divine nature, but to the one Divine-human person. I am well aware that to the finite intellect this must ever be a fathomless mystery. But the testimony of the Bible to it as a fact is unmistakable.

And the two natures in the one person have a profound significance in the working out of the scheme of human redemption. This mysterious union of the natures in the person of our Lord provides for the adequate representation of God to man, and man to God. "A mediator is not of one but of both." In Jesus Christ we have a representation of the Deity not only in the immensity of His love, but in all the peerless grandeur of His incomunicable perfections; for in "Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." In Jesus Christ we have a perfect representation of man both as he actually *is* and as he *ought* to be. The depth of man's present guilt is seen in the humiliation and sufferings of Christ; the sublime possibilities of which man is capable are seen in the perfect conformity of the earthly life of Christ to the eternal law of righteousness. The Hypostatic

union is no mere dogma but one of the foundation stones of redemption—a necessary truth and a prime factor in the economy of grace.

3. The views we take of the nature of sin and the penalties attached thereto will greatly modify our views of the atonement. Under-rate the awfully significant fact of sin and you will inevitably underrate the atonement. The history of Christian doctrine proves nothing more clearly than as men think lightly of sin they think lightly of the method of its removal. At the root of every theory that under-values the mediatorial work of Christ you will find that however melancholy its influence on man, sin, as committed against God, is regarded as a light thing.

So far as you contemplate the object of the atonement you have on every theory the fact of sin as its foundation principle. What is sin? "The transgression of the law?" Yes: and in that brief definition there is a universe of important truths. There is implied the moral nature of man, his relation to the Lawgiver, and the sanctions attached to the law when promulgated. Into these we cannot now enter, though they have an intimate connection with, and an important bearing on the subject now before us. Suffice it to say, then, that man lifted his hand in defiance of the law under which he was placed by the Creator. This brings us to another important observation.

4. Law cannot be violated with impunity. The law under which man was placed was no arbitrary appointment of the Almighty, but a transcript of His own righteousness, founded upon the facts of man's nature and the principles of the Divine Government. If man violates the law the threatened punishment must be inflicted. God Himself has no authority to remit the penalty. *Why* was the penalty attached to the law when it was promulgated? Was it just that it should be attached to the law at first? Then not to inflict it in case of transgression would be manifestly unjust. However man may vacilate God cannot say one thing and mean another. What is punishment? It is necessary to overall our thinking on this subject. In the strictest sense of the term I understand punishment to be suffering inflicted for wrong-doing. It is not a process aiming at the reformation of the offender but merited suffering on account of transgression: neither is punishment an expedient to prevent future transgressions, but an infliction for past sin demanded by the law of righteousness: much less is it the expression of resentment in God on account of the insult offered to His person but because of the transgression of the law of righteousness of which He is the Administrator. No fact in nature, no truth in theology is more

plain or authoritative than this that suffering inevitably follows the transgression of law, physical or moral.

Many say that this is too severe; which is another way of saying that man is more tender and compassionate than God, a statement we shall do well to ponder ere we accept. There is at work in secret a morbid sentiment about the love of God which saps the foundation on which the whole scheme of salvation rests. Men magnify the love of God into such proportions that they forget that He has other attributes, and they put the perfections of the Deity into conflict with each other, and contradict the plainest facts in the experience of His creatures. God is love, but it is a perversion of that grand attribute to magnify it until it obscures His wrath against sin. It is high time the intelligence of Christendom rose in one loud and solemn protest against this one-sided view of the character of God. Again I affirm He is a God of love, but he is a God of justice too. Nowhere is this truth seen as it is in the mediatorial work of His Son. It is a lens in which these two attributes are equally focalized. It proclaims as nothing else does or can to the outermost limits of God's domain that law cannot be violated with impunity. Before sin can be forgiven God must become man and endure Himself the penalty our sin had deserved. The cross is at once the exhibition and triumph of Divine love and Divine law. This brings us to another thought.

5. In what respect did Christ bear the penalty of man's sin? or to state the same idea in another form, What is the relation of Christ, as Mediator, to the law which man had broken? We are overwhelmed at the idea of the Divine-Human Christ being punished for sin: but does not this arise from our superficial views of sin and our imperfect conceptions of the majesty of that Divine law the sinner has broken? If our observations about law and penalty are right there can be no forgiveness without an atonement which squarely meets the penalty pronounced upon the sinner. I hold that Christ, our representative, has done this. The penalty was death. It is declared in Scripture that all men died in Him, "Because we thus judge if one died for all, then all died," not as in our own version, "Then were all dead." Now, in what sense can it be said that all men died in Him unless He were as truly the representative head of mankind as was Adam? The idea of the Apostle is that Christ's death in relation to the broken law was as if all sinners had died. The Apostle states the same idea in another form in the last verse of the same chapter: "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

How was Christ "made sin for us?" Certainly not by actual transgression. The solution of this question has sometimes been sought by rendering the phrase "made sin for us" by "a sin-offering for us" a blessed Scripture truth, but it is inadmissible to attach that idea to the phrase in this verse for the simple reason that it destroys the Apostles antithesis. There is no sense in which you can interpret this phrase in harmony with its context which does not regard Christ as the voluntary vicarious representative of our race. And as such God laid on Him the awful judicial consequences of the sin of mankind. Peter gives us the same idea: "Who his own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." How did Christ bear sin? He was not a sinner. He was never personally displeasing to God, but as our representative he so bore the penalty of sin as to meet the demands of the law on the original offender.

There was no transfer of the sinners' guilt to Christ in the sense of blameworthiness, but if you use the word guilt to express a liability to suffer for sin, then there was such a transfer from man to Christ. This is the very core of the teaching by which the work of Christ was kept before the minds of the Jewish Church. Under that dispensation the offender was required to bring the animal appointed as the sacrifice for sin. His appearance at the altar with the victim was an acknowledgment that he was under obligation to die for his sin. But the innocent victim took the sinner's place, and its life was taken instead of that of the sinner himself. The animal was regarded as the representative of the wrong-doer. So Christ as our representative bore the penal consequences of sin instead of us. His death was substituted for ours. He stood in our place as transgressors of the eternal law of righteousness. He represented us to God as the Administrator of that law. His death, on account of the infinite dignity of His person, was accepted as answering all the claims of justice, as maintaining unblemished the rectitude of the Divine government, while it secured the exercise of mercy toward the sinful. Christ did not die to induce God to be merciful—that is a caricature of the atonement and a blasphemy against God—but to make the exercise of mercy consistent with justice. "That He might be *just* (not merciful) and the *justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus," is the Scripture way of stating this truth.

Sometimes it is objected to the principle that I have laid down concerning the representative character of Christ's sufferings and death that it is flagrantly unjust for the innocent to suffer for the guilty. This objection comes from two different classes of men; those who ignore the truth of Christianity altogether, and those who admitting

the truth of Christianity deny that the sufferings and death of Christ are to be regarded as an atonement for sin. To reply to the latter class first: Is it more unjust for the innocent Christ to suffer instead of the guilty than it is for Him to suffer as an example to the guilty? On the theory that the sufferings of Christ are not to be regarded as an atonement for sin—endured by "the just for," or instead of "the unjust"—our faith in the righteousness of God is sadly shaken. If the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God were not necessary in order to honour the law man had broken, then they were manifestly unjust; but if they were required of Him as the sinner's representative, and He assumed His representative character voluntarily, and had the right so to do, then the injustice vanishes as the mist before the morning's sun. And this is our answer to the other class of objectors: the voluntary character of the sufferings of Christ removes everything like injustice. If Christ had not been a voluntary victim He would never have been a victim at all. There is a marvellous difference between the *imposition* of the penalty of the law upon an innocent being, and the *voluntary assumption* of that penalty by the innocent party, especially when you remember the absolute right Christ had to dispose of his own life. It has been well remarked that "We may defy the human mind to devise any other plan of pardon and salvation which is not unworthy of God, nay, unworthy of man, and consequently ineffectual and illusory."

6. But there is another aspect of the atonement which we must consider. As the federal head and representative of mankind Christ met the requirements of the eternal law of righteousness by enduring its penalty in His own person, His own infinite dignity making His death a satisfaction for the sins of all mankind. We have now to consider Him as the representative of God to man. Christ is as truly God as the Father. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." But He took our nature into union with the Divine that He might reveal the Deity to humanity. A large number of texts show this. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst, and we beheld His glory (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father—He hath declared him." God does not send a messenger to mankind; He comes Himself to show us what He is in His relation to us. Man's heart yearned for this the wide world over. With the light men had concerning God before the advent of Christ they could not be satisfied as to the dispositions the Divine Being cherished towards them. Philip's request, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," was not a solitary instance

but the expression of a universal need which is met in the mystery of the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." By this wondrous manifestation of the Deity men see the unutterable love of His heart, the unwavering rectitude of His government, and the perfection and glory of all His attributes. All other revelations of God are partial, one-sided, and so far unsatisfactory; but here we have the glory, majesty and might of his nature manifested in connection with sublime condescension, infinite love, and a profound desire for the recovery and salvation of a fallen race. In Christ we have such a manifestation of God as is not only calculated to flood the understanding with light, but move the heart and inspire us with hope.

7. If my hearers have followed the statements which have been made they will perceive that in one aspect the atonement is Christ considered as the perfect and voluntary representative of sinful man to God, bearing the penalties of His own immutable law instead of the race that had sinned, thus making the exercise of mercy possible without giving any countenance to sin. In the other aspect the Atonement is the perfect representation of God to man made in the person of Jesus Christ, correcting all the misconceptions of God which had beclouded man's intellect and allaying all the fears that had thrilled his heart with terror. In Jesus Christ He is no less the infinite and holy God, but he becomes the familiar God, the august but intimate friend of mankind whom the humble and the trustful learn to call by the name of Father. Properly understood these two ideas express the Scripture doctrine of Atonement. They recognize it as a necessity in the Divine attributes, they regard it as a vindication of the law of righteousness, and they exhibit it as a motive to induce men to abandon sin and turn to God. It is neither the substitutionary, nor the governmental, nor the moral influence theory that contains the whole truth on this vital subject—each is true in its own sphere—but it is the union of the three in one which constitutes the complete Scriptural idea of atonement.

8. This representative character of Christ as the substitute for sinners is the touchstone wherewith to test error on this vital subject. Any theory which lacks this element is faulty and unscriptural—unscriptural in the sense of defect. During the past few years errors on this subject have appeared which, by reason of the nomenclature in which they are stated, men suppose to be new. But the careful student of the history of doctrine will not fail to recognize them as old errors in a new dress. The phraseology is more like the truth than formerly, and they are all the more dangerous for that; but when stripped of their new trappings they appear

in all their old deformity. There are many shades of expression, but they all resolve themselves into two fundamental ideas, they all regard Christ as an example or a teacher merely.

(1) Christ's work is regarded by some as that of a mere exemplar, not that of a substitute. Robertson in his remarkable sermon entitled "Caiaphas' view of vicarious sacrifice," lays emphasis upon the vicarious principle, but what does he mean when he applies it to Christ's work? To use his own illustration, "Christ approached the whirling wheel (of the world's evil) and was torn in pieces." Why? why! according to Robertson it was in order that we might learn how to bear the tearing ourselves; that as we study Christ's life and death we might admire and imitate His example. A beautiful theory, and in one respect a blessed truth, but when we are told that this was the sole aim of Christ's mission to earth we are compelled to demur. If Christ only came into the world to show us the proper attitude we should assume toward evil, He is not the Christ of the New Testament writers. In what way does Christ as an example meet the demands of the law man has broken? In what way does such a theory provide for the pardon of past sin? This is the central and radical defect of all theories which contemplate Christ as a mere example, and before we can accept any of them we must have a new Bible, for the old book declares that Christ is "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

(2) Others tell us that Christ came as a teacher of truth, a revealer of the mind and heart of God toward humanity, this in itself is also a blessed fact, but when it is claimed that this was the sole object of His mission it becomes a mischievous and dangerous error, even though it should emphasize His death as that of a martyr for the confirmation of the truths He had taught. Several objections to this theory present insuperable difficulties to my mind.

(a) It is anything but clear that the heroic death of a martyr proves the truth of the doctrine for which he dies; if you admit that, then you admit the truth of all religions, for they have all had their martyrs. All that can be fairly inferred from the death of any martyr is that he firmly believes the truth of the doctrine for which he dies, but it is not and cannot be any evidence of its truth to another. If the truth of Christ's doctrine depended upon this fact its foundation would be uncertain, and the hope of salvation would be slender indeed.

(b) Another fatal objection to this theory is that the doctrine of Christ was singularly incomplete at the time of His death. He declared that the Apostles themselves were incapable of receiving it in all the breadth of

its significance. Did He not say just before the crucifixion, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." If then it is contended that Christ's death was designed as the confirmation of the doctrine He had taught, His death would only be the seal of what He had taught up to that time, and we should be left in doubt concerning its subsequent development through the medium of His servants.

(c) If the earthly mission of Christ was that of a mere teacher, then it will be difficult to satisfy the mind that the means were not disproportionate to the end. The incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity was an act of amazing condescension and must have sought the accomplishment of an object beyond the power of any creature. No creature could make atonement for sin but God has often employed even man for the communication of truth. In the presence of this theory the conclusion forces itself upon us that God could have commissioned one of our race for this work, and have given him such credentials of authority as would have placed his deliverances beyond the possibility of question. He had done this already under the Old Dispensation, He did it again in the case of the Apostles. If there had been no higher object in the incarnation of the Divine Son than that of a teacher, it seems to me the end was unworthy of the means, for the Divine Being might have made known all His will through a human agent.

(d) If this theory of a Divine teacher be the sole end of Christ's mission, then only those who come into direct contact with the truths He uttered can reap any advantage from His incarnation. What becomes of all who die in infancy? Do they pass into eternity unblessed by Christ's mission and work? What becomes of the millions who lived on the earth before Christ assumed our nature and taught among men? What becomes of the millions who live and die in ignorance of Christ's person as well as of what He taught? It is not requisite to this argument that I should here show how the death of Christ is an inestimable advantage to every man that comes into the world. I only wish to indicate that if this theory of Christ's mission be true no man can in *any way* be benefited by it who does not apprehend the truths He taught. So that this theory places itself in the most direct antagonism to one of the most indisputable doctrines of Scripture, namely: the universality of the benefits of His death?

(e) The central difficulty and the most radical defect of this theory is precisely the same as that which regards Christ as a mere example: it makes no provision for the honouring of a broken law or for the pardon of past sin. What permanent advantage can it be to a man to apprehend the truths Christ taught, or to conform to the example He set

so long as there is the guilt of past sin resting on the soul? Though Christ was the grandest of all teachers sent from God, if you ignore His death as a propitiation for sin you may accept every truth He uttered, and sincerely try to exhibit it in the life, and yet I am bold to affirm, that truth will leave you as it found you a violator of the eternal law of righteousness with all its terrible penalties in full force against your soul.

9. It is sometimes asked if Christ made atonement for the sins of the world how comes it that some men are never saved, and how can they be punished for sins for which He made atonement? This way of putting this objection has perplexed some, but it only needs a little close thought to detect the fallacy hidden in its terms. We may lay it down as an indisputable principle that all moral agents have a period of probation. Moral agency implies the power of choice. The command by which Adam was tested was a prohibition: "Thou shalt not eat of it." His loyalty to God was tested by his attitude toward that commandment. Though we inherit a fallen nature in consequence of our relation to Adam; yet, considered as moral agents, the atoning work of Christ places us in a position equal to that of Adam in Eden. As moral agents we must be tried in some way; our loyalty to God is tested by the command to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Our destiny hangs upon our obedience to this command as Adam's hung upon the command not to take the fruit of the tree of life. God said to our first parents "Thou shalt not," and with equal authority He says to us "Thou shalt," and all the tremendous issues of life and death eternal hang upon compliance in the one case as in the other. Christ's atonement has made the forgiveness of sin possible in the Divine economy; but pardon cannot be forced upon any man. His moral nature forbids that. Christ in His representative character must be chosen before the direct benefits of His mediation can be realized. If Christ's atonement be rejected "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins;" and without a sacrifice the penalty of the broken law is in full force against the original offender. Nothing is more clearly taught in Scripture than that men for whom Christ died may perish. It follows, therefore, that if the atonement of Christ is to be of any direct personal advantage to us it must be believed with the heart. There must be a personal acceptance of Christ as our representative, or His work cannot avail for us. This is the simple condition on which infinite Wisdom and Love has suspended the destiny of our race. The atonement is not the payment of a debt; but a scheme which makes the forgiveness of sin consistent with the perfections of the Divine attributes and the requirements of the law of righteousness, which forgiveness is only

available to the penitent soul who turns from sin with abhorrence and with a personal faith in Christ makes the benefits of the atonement his own.

Thus the atonement presents us with the highest possible motive for loyalty to God. The man who can contemplate it without feeling gratitude to God and fervent desire to obey His commandments must be destitute of every tender sensibility which usually moves a human heart. The end of all the

fathomless mystery of the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God is to lead man back in loving obedience to his rightful Lord, and draw his soul into a blessed unity with the Eternal Father of his spirit. So that I may conclude in the forceful words of Joseph Cook: "If the great things man wants are riddance from the love of sin, and deliverance from the guilt of sin, we can obtain the first best, and the latter only, by looking on the cross."

The Atonement of Christ,

The Conservative Force of the Moral Universe.

A SERMON

By REV. W. JACKSON.

Col. i. 19-20: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

No greater man than the author of these words was ever born of woman. His life is one of the profoundest studies history affords the student. Before he was converted he was of a violent temper, and his depraved powers were driven by a torrent of turbulent impulses. His natural disposition led him to cling to the principles of the Pharisees, the dominant sect of religionists among his countrymen. He was cultured withal, endowed with the gift of eloquence, and well versed in the traditions of his sect. His religion, however, was a destructive zeal, and his anger-fierceness. "He breathed out threatening and slaughter" against the infant Church of Jesus Christ. Such was this man ere grace sanctified and directed his nature.

Behold the change which grace hath wrought! The lion has become a lamb, the Ethiopian, whiter than snow. The hasty, ungovernable Saul has become the gentle and tender Paul. The harsh, cruel, fanatical zealot has become the humble disciple of Jesus, the sympathizing friend and brother of mankind.

His writings are the reflection of his own character. Here we find severity blended with a manly seriousness. Here are sentiments which strike on the intellect like rays of light, and a wealth of pathos which melts the heart. Here is the strength of a giant combined with the sympathy and tenderness of woman, while there is an utter absence of whining and cant. In these remarks you must bear in mind that I take it for granted that he was indebted to the grace and spirit of God for all he was and did as an Apostle or a Christian.

The one thing which distinguished him from his brethren, and that which best enables us to understand his life is the peculiar impression the idea of a universal religion

made on his mind. This idea never so profoundly engrossed any other human soul. In his endeavours to make this idea a fact he spent all his transcendent gifts and graces. Of course this idea was a revelation from God, not the product of his own brain. It was this idea that kindled his enthusiasm, nerved him with exhaustless energy, and strengthened his fortitude and endurance. This was the inspiration of all his travels, sermons, and epistles. The world for Christ, and Christ for the world was the ambition which fired his great soul and kept it continually ablaze.

The letters he addressed to the churches his energies had founded are monuments alike of his greatness of intellect and heart. Many of his words wing us away into the mysteries of the Deity or sink us in the depths of His unmeasurable love. Some of them take us back to the verge of creation, or carry us down the cycles of the unseen and unending future. This text we have to-night is one of the profoundest utterances that ever fell from his lips or leaped from his pen. In its grasp of redemption, in its influence on the destiny of men and angels it stands alone; like the highest peak in a vast range of mountains, its base is on the earth, its top is lost in the clouds of heaven. "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

These words contain much doctrinal instruction it will be impossible for us to consider in a single discourse. For instance, underlying these words—the very base on which they rest—is the doctrine of the Incarnation. "A doctrine which in its whole amount," as Bishop Horsley remarks, "is this: that one of the three persons of the Godhead was united to a man, that is, to a human body and a human soul, in the person of Jesus, in order to expiate the guilt of the whole human race, by the death of the man so united to the Godhead." Christ did not cease to be what He before was, God with God; but he became what He before was

not, man with men. Jesus Christ was not humanity deified, neither was He Deity humanized; but the Divine and the human nature united to make one person, as body and soul are united to make one man. This is a profound mystery we cannot fathom or comprehend, but the first truth in the economy of grace.

We have, also, a comprehensive statement of the doctrine of atonement in this text. This is the grandest work of God, revealing God to man, and man to himself as they are revealed nowhere else. In the atonement every attribute of the Deity combines to shed a brightness over the Divine character, which exceeds all the glory of former manifestations as the light of the sun exceeds the light of the glow-worm. It sheds the rays of heaven upon the questions of sin and misery, and throws over the darkness of human destiny a flood of light. It shows us how the Divine-human Christ—the incarnate God—became the sinners' substitute, and by His death reconciled God to man and man to God. Upon the general doctrine of Atonement I spoke to you two weeks ago, and I am not going to enlarge upon that aspect of the question again to-night.

The text calls our attention to an aspect of this subject which is seldom discussed. Christ is here revealed to us not only as the Incarnate Word and Redeemer of man, but also as the conservator of the moral universe. "And having made peace through the blood of the cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Here you perceive that the redemption of man by Christ is predicated with being a means of good to the angels in heaven. What is called "the moral influence" theory of the atonement is a one-sided half-truth when applied to fallen man; but it is a blessed whole-truth when applied to the un fallen intelligences who surround God's throne in the heavenly world. This I conceive to be the drift of the Apostle's meaning when he speaks of Christ's death reconciling the heavenly hosts to the Eternal Father. Reconciling, not in the sense in which that term is applied to man; but the bringing and binding together in eternal harmony of these holy intelligences by the study of this wondrous scheme, and the Divine character as seen therein.

Some may be led to regard these statements as the speculations of the preacher rather than the voice of God. To the law and the testimony, if it be not the voice of revelation reject it at once. There is just this remark to be made, we are indebted solely to Paul for what light we possess on this subject. He alone was commissioned to publish it to the world. With the single exception of the text, all he has given us on

this subject is found in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Turn, then, to the first chapter of that epistle and read with me beginning at the seventh verse: "In whom we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and in earth, even in Him." I cannot, as some, regard the Apostles here as speaking of the gathering of the Jews and Gentiles into one Church. By "the dispensation of the fulness of times," Paul evidently means the outcome of all the dispensation; and by "the things in heaven and earth" he evidently means the different orders of intelligent beings.

Turn now, if you will, to the third chapter of the same epistle and begin to read at the eighth verse: "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship (or "dispensation," as it ought to be rendered) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus the Lord. From this passage it is evident that it was part of the Divine plan in the redemption of man by Jesus Christ to impress the minds of angels with the excellency His character, and in this way ensure their allegiance for ever.

Look again at the text: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. Bengel regards this verse as though it referred to the reconciliation of angels to men by the death of Christ, angels being God's friends, were men's enemies while he was hostile to God. But the reconciliation of which Paul speaks is not of angels to man, nor of man to angels; but of both to God. As Alford remarks, "Sinful creation is reconciled to God strictly by Christ; sinful creation is reconciled to God; by a nearer relation, and a higher glorification of Him"—by the law of sympathy and love.

These are all the passages of Scripture which treat of this subject, and they teach us just this much: while the angels, as holy beings, did not need the death of Christ as

an atonement for sin; nevertheless, the fruits of His redemption tend to their benefit. God will, in the "dispensations of the fulness of times," by the death of Christ, gather into union and harmony *all holy* beings whether angels or men, with Christ as their Head and Lord.

The arguments for the universal restoration of men to the favour of God based on these passages are ruled out by the emphatic phraseology of each of the texts. It is only of "things in heaven" and "things in earth" of which the Apostle speaks. There is no mention of hell here. True, Christ is Lord of *all* worlds; but when Scripture speaks of His general kingship there is mention made of the world of woe. True, that "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, *and things under the earth*." But there is a marvellous difference between the mere acknowledgment of Christ's universal sovereignty, and loving sympathy with His person and loyalty to His laws. This is just the difference between all holy intelligences, and the rebellious part of God's creation. The question of Universalism, in any of its varied forms of development, finds no countenance from these texts; and must, therefore, be decided without any reference to these particular Scriptures. What then, are the lessons to be learned from this subject?

1. First. *That all moral beings stand in peril from which the atonement of Christ, by means of its conservative force will effectually protect all who have passed their probationary period in the love of virtue and loyalty to God.*

We have two striking illustrations of the fallability and peril of pure moral beings in the case of angels and men. Among the myriads of beings who surrounded the heavenly throne, a vast multitude were unfaithful to their powers and privileges. For these there is no redemption. (Will you pardon me if I turn aside here for a moment. I have asked myself as no doubt you have done "How is it that man was redeemed while the angels who sinned were not?" I have thought it might be because the angels were each a separate creation, while mankind sprang from a federal head, and the race to which we belong must therefore stand in a somewhat different relation God and His law to what the fallen angels do. Whether this be the solution of the question or not, the fact itself is indisputable, and, from what we know of the character of God, we are bound to conclude there was some just and good reason for the difference though at present we are not able to discern it. But to return.) The angels sinned against such light and love, there is, for them, no possibility of recovery. Their great gifts increased their responsibility and their peril; and now, in misery commensurate with

their crime, they await "the vengeance of eternal fire." Adam the federal head and representative of the human race fell from the high position and the holy estate in which his Maker placed him.

Absolute freedom from liability to fall belongs alone to God. Freedom of will is essential, inherent in the nature of all moral agents. To say that an agent is free is to admit the *possibility* of failure. Well has it been said that "In finite beings freedom to do right involves freedom to do wrong always and everywhere." Do I then believe that saints or angels in heaven may fall into sin. I believe that they retain the *power* to sin, but sin is not so much a question of *ability* as of *will*. What I think this subject teaches is this: Such will be the influence of redemption on the minds of the angels and saved men that they will have no *will* to sin. "The pure spirits who shall have, through a sufficient probation, maintained their integrity and entered upon their reward in the very presence of God, with all about them and all within them mightily tending to strengthen all goodness, shall be, though not naturally, nor absolutely, yet in fact and in effect, incapable of transgression." This leads us to another thought suggested by this subject:

2. *To accomplish this end the atonement of Christ contemplates the gathering together into one kingdom all holy intelligences, "Whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.*

All pure moral beings retain their freedom in heaven, but the conservative influence of the death of Christ renders it not only *probable* but *certain*—that they will never exercise it in the guilt and folly of rebellion. The angels are represented as diligent students of the mysteries of redemption. They have been Christ's chosen instruments in working out His purposes in reference to man. They are to be the companions of redeemed men through the unending years. Their interest and service in connection with human redemption acts with a gracious reflex influence on their own destiny.

There are two ways of preventing the commission of evil. I wish, for instance, to prevent a child learning to swear; I cut out his tongue, or I destroy his power of hearing; that is one way: or I instruct the child in the folly and sin of such conduct, and set before him the example of my own life until this sin becomes an abomination unto him. In other words I may prevent sin by lessening the power of a moral agent, or I may do it by strengthening the powers he has and fortifying his motives and love of virtue, that is another and a better way of attaining the same end. Throughout eternity good men and angels will retain all the powers they now possess, but such will be the influence of redemption on their minds,

as they see it in all its depths and heights, that sin will not only be distasteful but utterly abhorred.

Sin sent a shock through all the heavenly intelligences working ruin and death. The transgression of the hierarchies of heaven struck the first note of discord in the creation of God. The obedient host stood in mute amaze as they beheld their former companions hurled from heaven's height into the dark abyss. When man the best and noblest of all God's intelligent creatures followed in the wake of "Wicked spirits in high places," there was additional cause for alarm, as the howl of sin's discordant notes reached the battlements of heaven.

More strange to angels still would seem the assumption of human nature by the Second Person of the Godhead for the redemption of a guilty, rebel race. But when the fulness of all the dispensations shall have come ; when angels and men shall have been drawn together by the magnetic power of the cross ; when redemption shall have fused all God's obedient creatures into a white heat of gratitude and love ; when all the depths of the wisdom and goodness of God, as seen in the Gospel, shall have welded angels and men together in one harmonious and happy whole : such will be the views of God's character it will inspire that eternity will be spent in the adoration of a Being so wise and glorious, so just and good.

3. A third lesson suggested by this subject is that it is a great relief to our reason to be able to see that the Incarnation of the Son of God and the unfathomable mystery of the Divine Sacrifice had a wider scope than this little world and its few inhabitants.

This earth is but a speck in creation. Myriads of worlds lie hidden from our gaze in the depths of space. Reasoning from analogy, we may suppose that they are as densely populated as our own. At any rate we have the authority of revelation for believing in the existence of a countless multitude of angels. Now there are thoughtful men who are staggered by the amazing condescension of God in the redemption of our world by the death of His Son,—at Heaven emptying itself for such as ourselves. Offered principally for man, as an atonement only for man, the death of Christ is much further reaching in its results. By a reflex influence it reaches all worlds, and is yet to become the bond and unifying power of all holy intelligences. The Sun of Righteousness which has arisen on us with such healing in his wing, is to reach and brighten other worlds, and conserve and intensify the happiness and worship of the sinless hosts of heaven.

The stray light which the text, and its parallels in the Epistle to the Ephesians, throws on the results of Christ's mediation reveals a breadth and height of glory trans-

cending all our conceptions. We are apt to look at all things in the light of our own narrow sphere, and limit all results by the bound of our own vision. Here we see that the redemption of man by Jesus Christ is only a part of a vast and glorious scheme which shall ultimately reach and bless all the obedient in God's creation.

These indirect benefits of the atonement, though they are but very imperfectly understood are fitted, not only to enlarge our minds, but to benefit our hearts. Whatever draws us out of self, or the immediate sphere in which we move, helps to expand our conceptions of God and widen our sympathy with the other races His hands have made. This subject presents the moral governments of God as vast and complicated ; but at the same time, by redemption, His purpose is to reduce it to one unique and harmonious whole, including "All things in heaven and in earth."

All this is part of an eternal plan which the Deity has been working out since first His power was displayed in the creation of intelligent creatures, namely : the conservation and unification of all holy things. The scheme of redemption is the instrumentality God employs in working out this beneficent end. While the immediate and direct subjects of redeeming grace are sinful men, it has a comprehensive though indirect bearing on the whole universe.

It is designed to reconcile all things to God and bring all holy intelligence under one system of perfect order, harmony, and love. When the years of old time shall have exhausted themselves, and the cycles of eternity shall begin, what a jubilee awaits the sons of God ? Then all sin shall be subdued, and all incorrigible and impenitent sinners shall be shut up where they can no longer contaminate others with their vileness or hatred of God. Then all the great and true from every age and every rank in creation shall be gathered into one, and Christ shall be "All in all to the glory of God the Father."

4. Yet once more: *This subject opens out to our view some satisfactory notion of what the saved are to do in eternity.*

The popular notions of heaven are exceedingly defective, and equally unsatisfactory. Who can persuade himself that intelligent redeemed men can find eternal enjoyment in the popular notions of "crowns," and "palms," and "songs." Mind I do not undervalue these Scripture terms. They have a significance dear to the heart of every good man. They stand for realities which ought to make the soul thrill with rapture. But these figures do not by any means express the whole of the heavenly life or even the chief part of it.

In one of the passages quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians there is an expres-

sion which may help us to form some intelligent idea on this subject. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He hath purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here you perceive that the redeemed Church is to be the eternal manifestation and unfolding, to the heavenly host, of the wisdom of the Divine purposes in the redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

I have spoken of the shock to the angels caused by the introduction of sin into the creation. Reasoning from what we know of man, is it too much to say that the permission of evil was a subject unfathomable even to angel's minds, and if this is true of the introduction of sin, what shall we say of the recovery of man by the incarnation and death of the Son of God? Remember the angels witnessed the downfall of their companions unfollowed by the appointment of a redeemer, therefore, when they saw Heaven empty itself for the redemption of man, is it too much to affirm that it was matter of wonder and amazement—had depths and heights they could neither fathom nor scale. But when "the fulness of the dispensation of times shall come," when they shall behold the outcome of the mediatorial scheme in the glorified church; when they look back upon

the methods, and look around them at the results they will be overwhelmed alike at the wisdom and the love of God.

The multitudes of redeemed men are represented in Scripture as "crying with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." The angels are represented as witnesses of this and moved at the sight in response they cry "Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Taking these Scriptures as the basis are we not warranted in affirming that the chief employment of heaven will consist in the study of the Divine character as exhibited in redeemed sinners.

Thus the redemption of man by Christ secures the highest destiny of the creature, the love and adoration of the Creator. "Unto the praise of the glory of His grace" is to be the final outcome of the mediatorialship of Christ. The ultimate aim of human redemption is to tune the lips of angels and sanctified men to the praise of God,—to fill every heart with love, and make the universe echo with hallelujahs to Him who died on the tree. May we be ready to participate in the joy of that triumphant hour, by a hearty acceptance of the benefits of Christ's mediatorial work. Amen.



